

Matthew 13:24-43 | Dave Stough

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Preacher: Dave Stough

[0:00] Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Okay. We are in the parables, as you know. We're going to pick it up where we left off last week, where Jeffrey left off.

We'll be doing verses 24 through 43 in a few moments. I would guess that most of you have heard the phrase, a picture is worth a thousand words, right?

Right? So a picture can capture what sometimes words just can't explain. I remember going to the Grand Canyon and taking pictures and then getting home and saying, not even these pictures can capture what I seen when I was there.

But having said all that, I wanted to kind of change that phrase a little today and say, a parable is worth a whole lot of pictures. One parable can place several pictures in your mind.

One little story. Now, we're in Matthew, and at this point in Matthew's Gospel, the Lord Jesus, He's encountered stiff opposition from those He presented Himself and the kingdom to.

[1:16] So the majority, the vast majority of the people in Israel had their doubts if He was the Messiah, to say the least.

There were those who believed, but most didn't. And the Pharisees, the religious community, had a heart so hard towards Him that when He was in their presence physically doing miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, their hearts were so hard that they attributed them to Satan.

Those are undeniable miracles. And so, they committed the unpardonable sin, and what I think that actually really, when you read it and analyze it, I think what that's saying is their hearts were so hard, there was no way they would ever believe.

Because unbelief is the one thing that God can't pardon. So, in the 12th chapter of Matthew, it's said that the Pharisees were already plotting how to kill Jesus.

So, he's documenting this rejection. So, if you place yourself in the shoes of the disciples then, you have believed that He's the Messiah, you know He's the Son of God, and He's the Messiah.

[2:40] And you see this rejection going on, and your understanding of the kingdom is kind of like John the Baptist's understanding. He's going to set up this kingdom that's going to be partly governmental and stuff.

Wouldn't you be asking yourself, what about that kingdom if they reject you? John the Baptist assumed Jesus would quickly judge the unbelievers, and then just go ahead and set it up.

So, knowing His crucifixion is coming, Jesus teaches the disciples that the kingdom is going to be a bit different, we'll say, for a period of time at least, than what they were thinking then.

The kingdom will first be a time of mercy before judgment. The kingdom will begin with a crucified and risen king.

They didn't know about this, right? The disciples didn't know this yet. So, the parables of Matthew 13, it's like Jesus is telling them what the kingdom is going to be like, but they don't know before He tells them about His crucifixion, so He's kind of doing it in this order for His reasons.

[3:49] But they describe the spiritual course the kingdom takes from the time Christ's rejection until He returns at the end of the age. That's what these parables, the time period, they cover.

Now, when you read the first chapter of Acts, Matthew and the other disciples, you could pretty much assess that they didn't actually understand or didn't fully understand, we'll say, what Jesus taught in these parables yet, even then.

Even though at the end of this chapter, it says that He asked them, did they understand? They said yes. Yes. But you can tell they don't because they asked, Lord, will You establish the kingdom?

Restore the kingdom at this time? And as you will see in a few moments as we read these parables, they teach that the kingdom of heaven, it grows expansively over a period of time with the true and the false in it.

And He even told them to go make disciples in all the nations. And they're asking, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Now, I wonder what it was like for the apostle Matthew to write his gospel years later, you know, writing this out.

[5:13] And I could say, I'm sure I would have been the same way, probably worse, even because God works His will out in each of us, right?

Our understanding of Him and what He's doing grows as His will works out personally in our lives. I think our understanding of who He is and what He's doing grows. So we're no different than the disciples.

Now, some other things about parables. Jesus taught in parables to both reveal, it says, and to conceal. So parables illustrate a divine truth to those who have ears to hear and obscures it from those whose hearts are hardened towards the Lord.

That's the principle that Jeffrey stated last week. It's in Matthew 13, 12. It says that whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance.

Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taking from them. It's like a divine principle. Parables are a way of teaching a spiritual truth by using ordinary object lessons well known to the people listening.

[6:48] So most people in Jesus' day grew their own food, right? So a number of these parables are involving crops and harvesting and that type of thing.

And the word parable, I found out, comes from two words in the Greek that are combined together, para and balo. And what it means is to throw alongside.

So our Lord takes a known physical truth, farming or leaven or something, and there's like an unknown spiritual reality here that when He explains this, those who are already believers, their understanding of that grows and they get the picture.

So it's kind of a truth, something put alongside something. You know, like for example, like last week's parable, Jesus used sowing seeds in various types of soil to illustrate how God's word, His word works in the minds and hearts of people.

When reading parables, we need to ask ourselves, what is the primary truth that Jesus wants us to understand? What's the main point of the parable?

[8:14] If you start there, you avoid a lot of confusion. I don't think what you want to do is to try to find out what every little detail in the parable is because there's parables that Jesus explained.

He doesn't even explain every little detail. Yes, there's more than one truth, but the other truths support the primary truth. So if you've learned that, then you can see everything a lot clearer. I think there's a lot of, you know, you read people, you listen to people, and there's a lot of people just looking for things to fit stuff that's already in their mind when they read the parables.

Parables drive home spiritual truths in a very understandable and even personal way. We can see ourselves in the parable, or we can see others in the parable.

And so like in last week's parable, when that was being read, you may have said to yourself, well, that good soil is where I want to be. You know, I want to have that kind of heart when it's ready for the Word of God.

Parables have the power to change our perspective and give us better insight to live for the Lord. They are designed to get us to think biblically.

[9:38] Jesus said, whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. You're not going to get the divine truth from God apart from agreeing with the Spirit of God who wrote that Word.

So there are seven parables in Matthew 13. In all of them, every one of them gave new insight to the people of that day when they heard Him for the first time.

He was revealing for the first time that the kingdom of heaven is going to be a spiritual kingdom first before being a physical kingdom later. So today we're going to look at three of them.

Last week's parable described how the kingdom of heaven is established. Today's three parables will describe how God's kingdom grows.

So with all that in mind, let's go ahead and read our text. Let's read our text. 24-43 of Matthew 13. Jesus presented to them another parable saying, the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

[10:49] But while the men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. And when the wheat sprouted and produced grain, then the tares also became evident.

And the servants of the landowner came and said to him, Sir, do you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? He said to them, An enemy has done this.

So the servants said to him, Then do you want us to go and gather them up? No, he replied, You'll uproot the wheat with them if you do. Let them both grow together until the harvest.

Then I will tell the harvesters to first gather the tares, tie them into bundles to be burned, and then gather the wheat into my barn. He put another parable before them saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

It is like the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

[12:00] He spoke to them another parable. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in 60 pounds, some of your translations say three measures, 60 pounds of flour until it was all leavened.

All these things Jesus did said to the crowds in parables. Indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet.

I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. Then he left the crowds and went into the house.

And his disciples came to him and said, Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field. And he said, The one who sows the good seed is the son of man, and the field is the world.

And the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the evil one. And the enemy he sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age.

[13:10] The reapers, they are the angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. A son of man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness.

And they will throw them into the furnace of fire, and in that place there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. That's a mouthful, huh? Verse 35 of our text says, These parables reveal what was hidden since the foundation of the world.

So picture yourself as one of the disciples hearing this. These truths were presented. This is the very first time. Brand new.

So God had the lessons from these parables planned since the beginning of time. And he's revealing them only to the ones who repented and believed that Jesus is the Messiah.

[14:32] As I mentioned earlier, they spent some time putting all this together even after this. These parables reveal that the kingdom of heaven will be spiritual in nature for a while, separate from the physical, governmental portion of the kingdom later.

This, of course, because of the cross. Right? The eternal plan of God was to first come and rescue sinners and build His kingdom with us.

It's because of God's plan of salvation that He sets up a kingdom this way. Part one being the spiritual aspect only, and part two being the spiritual and the governmental.

The Lord Jesus will come a second time to this earth in judgment and sit upon the throne of David, reigning and ruling the world from Jerusalem.

KJ, can you put up that first one? KJ, can you put up that first one? KJ, can you put up that first one? So, when you're looking at this chart here, you can say these parables, up there where the cross is, about that point, until the end of the tribulation, those seven years, is the period of time that these parables are talking about.

[16:08] Even the very first time you see these parables, you can see that Satan is busy the same time God is building the kingdom of heaven.

These parables don't fit the description of the millennial kingdom that you see there after this. I'd like to read a little bit of that description of the millennial kingdom for you.

It's kind of like a treat. Isaiah chapter 11. I'm going to read Isaiah 11, verses 4 through 10. You can pull that down, KJ. With righteousness, he will judge the needy.

With justice, he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth. With the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked.

It's talking about when he returns. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness, the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb.

[17:08] The leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf, and the lion, and the yearling together. And the little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear. Their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den.

And the young child will put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain.

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples.

The nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. So, that's what it's going to be like in the kingdom. Right?

[18:08] So, the effects of the curse of sin are reversed at that time. And the Lord Jesus is sitting on the throne then, here on earth.

This is why you can conclude that the time period described here in these parables is not during the millennial kingdom. scripture tells us in Revelation 20 that Satan will be chained up in the bottomless pit then, and not be active for a thousand years.

In this present age, the kingdom of heaven is a mixture of good and bad, true and false. Christ is building his kingdom for now through the church consisting of both Jew and Gentile while being opposed by Satan.

So, at the end of the age, at the end of that seven year tribulation, he will return to earth and finish fulfilling what he promised to Israel. These verses and many others are why John the Baptist and the disciples were looking for an actual governmental kingdom to be established back then in Israel. And what our Lord is saying here in Matthew 13 is he's saying the kingdom is going to be a spiritual kingdom first before that. So, these three parables are giving us a picture of how God's kingdom grows in the here and now.

[19:43] I know I've said that. So, we are blessed to look at one of these three today Jesus explains. So, it really helps with because when you get these parables, let me tell you, some of them, a lot of great Bible teachers I respect, you know, they're all over the place on this.

KJ, can you show that chart? Okay, this first parable here, you can't make that larger, can you, by any chance?

All right, there we go. We had to call on the big guns today, had all these things. Okay, so Jesus explains this. The man who sows the good seed is him, the son of man.

The field is the world. The wheat, the children of the kingdom. The tares, the children of the wicked one. Okay, and that wicked one, the enemy, is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age, better said, and the reapers are the angels. Okay, so, last week, the parable of the wheat and tares had seeds and soil, like this parable, but in that one, see, this one, the good seed is not the word of God, it's the sons of the kingdom, and the soil is not people's minds and hearts, it's the world.

[21:12] That's the big difference here, and I make note of that because in the context, you want to stick with what's there unless it's otherwise stated. So, Jesus is the one sowing the seeds who are true believers throughout the entire world.

Satan, sowing the tares, you could say is counterfeits in order to oppose the work of Christ building his kingdom. So, it's like Satan knows that he can't have us because we're sealed in Christ, we're the Lord's.

And so instead of, he can't uproot us. So instead of doing that, he plants his own. He plants his own people. And when you look in 1 John, you could see the tactic there too, in 1 John, it talks about the

spirit of Antichrist and about people that were amongst us that got up and left because they were not of us.

And that word Antichrist can be translated instead of Christ, one who opposes by imitating and replacing the real.

That's the gist of what's going on in this parable here. Now, did you notice notice in verse 26 that it was when the grain grew enough to produce a crop that it became evident to the servants that the tares or the weeds were in the field.

[22:53] Some of your translations say weed, that's what a tare is. Can you show that picture of the wheat and tare? So, darnell is the actual Greek word for the tare and that's the one on the right and the wheat's the one on the left.

It's harvest time. You can tell the difference because it's got kernels there. But when they're, unless, I'm assuming unless you've got a trained eye, I know when you look at a picture of them it's hard to tell when they're first growing.

Okay? Imitators. But, in this case, the fruit is what separates them. Now, so Jesus says he will have the harvesters take, you can set, you can take that picture off.

Jesus says he will have the harvesters take care of them at the end of the age. Jesus is saying right now alongside true believers will be the false.

And we know this very well just from the culture around us, right? Many of us came from churches that use the name of Christ but we didn't personally know the Lord. But that has actually been the state of the church since it began.

[24:21] You can even look in the book of Acts there was that one guy following Paul around. you know, there's people Satan has used this tactic for a long time. We'll just say that.

And what's behind this tactic is the exaltation of self. It's what motivates people to believe his lie. He appeals to our pride, our sin nature's pride. So we follow him and won't look at the gospel. So this tactic goes back a long way in the Bible.

Genesis 11, 4 says, Come, let us build ourselves a city whose tower reaches to the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves.

People feel good about themselves and are convinced they're doing the right thing. And all the while, they don't even know the Lord.

[25:27] And this describes us before we got saved. So, when you look at the Bible, you can rightly conclude that the first religious gathering recorded in the Bible was not people coming together to worship God.

It was for self-exaltation. Satan loves it when people unite around something that makes them feel good about themselves.

It's like a false unity and it's the primary way Satan plants his seeds in the world. I have a few video clips that demonstrate this today.

You can get ready with that first one. Kenneth Copeland has long been called out by Bible believers as a false teacher who serves the God of money.

That's not Kenneth Copeland, by the way. That's Amir Sephardi. But look at what he has introduced to people lately.

[26:40] He has been talking to the Vatican. A Catholic bishop came to speak at his church. This took place I think about a year ago. You can show that first one.

We know that the first thousand years there was one church. It was called the Catholic Church. And the word Catholic means universal. It doesn't mean Roman. Catholic means if you're born again, raise your hand if you're born again.

You're a Catholic. Come back home. Come back to what if... You can turn that off. So in that short little clip, it was less than 30 seconds, I heard two big lies really quick there.

One is the first thousand years the church was Catholic. Christ and his apostles started a church that was nothing like what he implying it was. the Catholic church is based on a state church.

And that wasn't around until about 300 A.D. with Constantine. And the other lie was obvious. If you're born again, you're a Catholic. Then, you got the next one?

[27:52] Then, Kenneth Copeland takes the mic. This one's a couple minutes. That's it. Enough is enough. the biggest church split in history.

When the Catholic church split, you know the story, the beginning of the protesting church. Among the people of love, we're called protesters. We've been protesting for 500 years, baby. October the 31st, 1999.

Representatives of the Catholic and the Lutheran churches gathered in Augsburg, Germany, and signed a joint declaration on the subject of justification.

and so 500 years of arguments, misunderstandings, and sometimes wars began to give way to reconciliation and recognition of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as placed within the body of Christ.

[29:18] It ended. but you see, once that main separating spirit of division was pulled down, it released the Lord Jesus to get this thing underway.

Amen. The protest has been over for 15 years. And I get a bit cheeky here, because I challenge my Protestant pastor friends, if there is no more protest, how can there be a Protestant church?

Maybe now we're all Catholics again. It's the glory that glues us together, not the doctrines. That's it. Okay. Did you hear that? I mean, I guess some of you are not surprised.

I didn't know they were going there. I just thought he was in the name and claim a group. He said the glory is more important than the doctrine.

He's saying that the glory of man is more important than this glory that creates a false unity is more important than what God says in his word.

[30:38] That's a line straight from hell, is it not? How a sinner gets right with the holy God can't be compromised. Many of you know Galatians 1 8 and 9 very well, but I'm going to read it again here.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so we now say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be devoted for destruction by God.

This is an example of the terrors in action today. And it's really the same technique he used at the Tower of Babel. The Lord said when explaining this parable that the angels will gather up these sons of Satan and cast them into a furnace of fire.

There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth, but the righteous will shine forth as the son in the kingdom of their father. Are you today among those who have been made righteous by God? Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins? Or do you think you're basically a good person that God will accept based on what you do?

[32:14] That's what I believed for a long time. The people building that one world religion right now, that's what they think. Christ, God's word says that Christ died for the ungodly.

Have you seen your need for Christ like a person who's drowning, sees their need for someone else to save them? Jesus laid down his life for our sin and rose from the dead to give us a gift, a gift of forgiveness and eternal life.

I hope you're trusting him alone today to be right with God. The next two parables our Lord Jesus did not explain. So therefore, we must use the context of the passage, understand, you've got to do a little Bible study here, and you've got to understand the grammar it's used, you've got to use the context of the rest of Scripture, and even understand the culture, what it was like for the people who were listening when it was first written.

These are the contextually, grammatically, historically, those are like the big principles of interpreting Scripture.

Scripture. And if you're consistent with how you use those, it makes the Bible, we'll just say, easier to understand.

[33:50] It keeps people, it keeps you from jumping around unnecessarily if you're consistent with those. Having said all of that, these parables are still, they're, you've got to pray a lot, we'll just say that and ask the Lord for insight.

Verse 31 says, he put another parable before them saying, the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it's larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

In Israel, the mustard seed was known as the smallest of seeds. The expression, it's not the smallest of all mustard seeds though, but in Israel it was known that way.

The expression as small as a mustard seed was a common expression for the Jews in Jesus' time.

The mustard seed is very tiny, but there are some seeds, like I said, that are even smaller.

[35:03] Jesus is using the common language here in a parable to illustrate a point. He was not intending to make a scientific claim as some of his critics say.

Again, understand the context, the culture. The parable of the mustard seed shows us how God's kingdom grew from something very small into something abnormally large.

in a relatively short amount of time. A small mustard seed produces a very large bush-like plant, or even in some cases, you can put the, can you put up both of those pictures?

Or we can do one at a time, that's okay. Some cases, they even grow into small trees. It's definitely much larger than any other plant in the garden, right?

So here's, that's the one that grew into a tree. Can you go back to the first one? That's what you see most often. And you could say, yeah, a bird could make his nest in that.

[36:09] But definitely the next one, there you go. So in last week's parable, birds represented Satan, who snatched away the Word of God.

So we can assume from the context, the same about the birds here. No reason not to. Notice they make their nest, their home place, in the mustard tree, which is the kingdom of heaven.

The image of the tree presented by Jesus in this parable would more than likely conjure up a picture in a Jewish mind of a world power.

You can look at Daniel 4. Daniel interprets the dreams. There are people, the Jews would understand this tree as a world power. And then you can also go and talk to Ezekiel 17, it talks directly about the kingdom of God, the kingdoms of that time and the kingdom of God, how they grow as a tree.

So, from that, you would think if you were sitting there listening to Jesus and he mentioned the kingdom of God is like a mustard tree, you probably would have these thoughts of some kind of power, some kind of world power.

[37:36] These facts and a look at church history suggest this parable is picturing the rapid growth of Christendom through state religion.

Notice I said Christendom, not Christianity. In the book of Acts and the era just following, the gospel was preached and the church grew as intended.

It was not a worldly power. It didn't take long though for worldly influences, the birds making their homes in the tree, didn't take long for the worldly influences in the church to change its message and Christ's name be used even in the name of conquering militarily.

Constantine had shields with the cross on them and became a state religion in Constantinople about 300 AD. So Christendom grew and became a world power politically.

What started out small and humble? Jerusalem in a humble manner turned into an organization boasting of its material wealth and its political power and it still exists to this day.

[38:56] The last parable in verse 33 it says the kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour which all the looking note I did says it's about 50 to 60 pounds of flour.

A large amount of flour. And she hid it in the flour till it was all leavened. Most of the time leaven is used in a negative way in scripture, right?

False doctrine, how it spreads. However, this parable says the kingdom of heaven is like leaven.

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven.

It does not say the kingdom of heaven is dough affected by leaven. Christ does not refer to leaven infiltrating the kingdom here, but rather in this parable leaven itself is the kingdom.

So, immediate context tells me it dictates that leaven must be something good. You can't assume the kingdom of God is bad. I mean, the mustard seed wasn't bad, it just grew into something bad.

[40:13] So, when I noticed that, I had to see if in the Bible is there anywhere in the Bible if that leaven is used in a good way.

To my surprise, there is. Leviticus 23.17 tells us that the Lord commanded the Israelites for the feast of Pentecost to take two loaves of fine flour baked with leaven and offer them, they would hand them to the priest and he would offer them as a wave offering before the Lord in worship. It was an offering of their first fruits to the Lord. So, like the rest of the Levitical offerings, it was a form of worship and pleasing to the Lord.

So, leaven is not always a symbol of something bad. In this parable, the leaven is used to show how the gospel spreads. Something that is tiny compared to the large amount of dough spreads its influence throughout it.

And it spreads it unseen the leaven is hidden but shows its effects throughout the entire batch. The gospel does its work unseen in the hearts of all the men and women who believe.

[41:43] The unstoppable influence of the gospel in the hearts of believers is not easily detected by other people when it's at work.

But the effects of it are seen in all of us who believe. Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus about being born of the Spirit?

The wind, you know, you don't know where the wind comes from or where it goes, and so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. You can hear the wind rustle tree leaves, right? But you don't know where it comes from or where it goes.

It's unseen. That's what's going on inside of us. It's like a physical war took place that the human eyes can't see.

It's a spiritual war fought in a person's mind where demonic strongholds are defeated. Hey, do you remember when Paul mentioned in his letters to the Philippians, he said, all the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

[42:50] So Paul's sitting in jail on some trumped up charges that the Jews had him in there for in a Roman jail and it was for preaching the gospel.

He's writing a letter to the Philippians while he's there and he ends it with the believers who are in the household of the ones who run the jail that I'm in, they greet you.

Paul's chained up or bound up, but God's word was it was at work in people's hearts, even in the household of Caesar. So the kingdom of God spreads but is not readily detected like a king leading an army would be.

Don't forget the disciples had at least in part those kinds of thoughts about the kingdom at this point and Jesus has given them new information. Can we have the musicians come up?

this was hard to do in a short amount of time guys. The secrets of the kingdom of heaven are directly tied to the nature of the king.

[44:01] Read that again. The secrets that Jesus had about the kingdom of heaven are directly tied to his nature, the nature that wants to seek and to save that which is lost.

His kingdom is different than what those who believed him initially expected it to be. In God's kingdom mercy triumphs over his judgment.

Amen? Amen. He demonstrated that for us at the cross. He is at this time patiently holding back judgment waiting for people to call upon him in faith.

Scripture tells us that God is patient towards us not willing that any should perish but all come to repentance. Our Lord did not seem like a king according to the world standard back then.

But those who realized by faith that he was the son of God knew he was the Messiah. Back then the people seen him ride on a donkey into Jerusalem just before he was crucified in the future everyone's going to see him ride on a white horse come into Jerusalem and it says in Revelation that he will tread the wine press to the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

[45:27] He'll have a crown on and written on him will be king of kings and lord of lords and he's going to judge those who refuse to believe in him.

How about you? I don't take it for granted anybody here. I trust in him today. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much. We thank you that you come to us in mercy, in love.

You shed your own blood to take away our sin. Thank you, Lord Jesus. We give you this honor and this praise. Lord, help us to see what you're doing in our lives, Lord, and to see Jesus more. It's his name we pray. Amen.